1427 JAH CAB V. **Jury Trial Demanded** Phoenix Debt Management, LLC Defendant.

#### Introduction

The United States Congress has found abundant evidence of the use of 1. abusive, deceptive, and unfair debt collection practices by many debt collectors, and has determined that abusive debt collection practices contribute to the number of personal bankruptcies, to marital instability, to the loss of jobs, and to invasions of individual privacy. Congress wrote the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act, 15 U.S.C. § 1692 et seq. (hereinafter "FDCPA"), to eliminate abusive debt collection practices by debt collectors, to insure that those debt collectors who refrain from using abusive debt



HYDE & SWIGART

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

28

Complaint

- 1 of 11 -

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

28

- collection practices are not competitively disadvantaged, and to promote consistent State action to protect consumers against debt collection abuses.
  - The California legislature has determined that the banking and credit system 2. and grantors of credit to consumers are dependent upon the collection of just and owing debts and that unfair or deceptive collection practices undermine the public confidence that is essential to the continued functioning of the banking and credit system and sound extensions of credit to consumers. The Legislature has further determined that there is a need to ensure that debt collectors exercise this responsibility with fairness, honesty and due regard for the debtor's rights and that debt collectors must be prohibited from engaging in unfair or deceptive acts or practices.
  - Fitima Robinson, (Plaintiff), through Plaintiff's attorneys, brings this action to challenge the actions of Phoenix Debt Management, LLC, ("Defendant"), with regard to attempts by Defendant to unlawfully and abusively collect a debt allegedly owed by Plaintiff, and this conduct caused Plaintiff damages.
  - Plaintiff makes these allegations on information and belief, with the exception 4. of those allegations that pertain to a plaintiff, or to a plaintiff's counsel, which Plaintiff alleges on personal knowledge.
  - Unless otherwise stated, Plaintiff alleges that any violations by Defendant 5. were knowing and intentional, and that Defendant did not maintain procedures reasonably adapted to avoid any such violation.

#### JURISDICTION AND VENUE

- Jurisdiction of this Court arises pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1331, 15 U.S.C. § 6. 1692(k), and 28 U.S.C. § 1367 for supplemental state claims.
- This action arises out of Defendant's violations of the Fair Debt Collection 7. Practices Act, 15 U.S.C. §§ 1692 et seq. ("FDCPA") and the Rosenthal Fair Debt Collection Practices Act, California Civil Code §§ 1788-1788.32 ("RFDCPA").

2

3

4

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

- 8. Because Defendant does business within the State of California, personal jurisdiction is established.
- 9. Venue is proper pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1391(b) and 1391(c).

#### **PARTIES**

- 5 10. Plaintiff is a natural person who resides in the State of California.
- 6 11. Defendant is from the City of Kansas City, the County of Jackson, and the State of Missouri.
  - 12. Defendant conducts business in San Diego County and is subject to personal jurisdiction in San Diego County, therefore Defendant resides in this judicial district pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1391(c).
  - 13. Plaintiff is obligated or allegedly obligated to pay a debt, and is a "consumer" as that term is defined by 15 U.S.C. § 1692a(3).
    - 14. Defendant is a person who uses an instrumentality of interstate commerce or the mails in a business the principal purpose of which is the collection of debts, or who regularly collects or attempts to collect, directly or indirectly, debts owed or due or asserted to be owed or due another and is therefore a debt collector as that phrase is defined by 15 U.S.C. § 1692a(6).
    - 15. Plaintiff is a natural person from whom a debt collector sought to collect a consumer debt which was due and owing or alleged to be due and owing from Plaintiff, and is a "debtor" as that term is defined by California Civil Code § 1788.2(h).
    - 16. Defendant, in the ordinary course of business, regularly, on behalf of himself, herself, or others, engages in debt collection as that term is defined by California Civil Code § 1788.2(b), is therefore a debt collector as that term is defined by California Civil Code § 1788.2(c).
    - 17. This case involves money, property or their equivalent, due or owing or alleged to be due or owing from a natural person by reason of a consumer

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

credit transaction. As such, this action arises out of a consumer debt and "consumer credit" as those terms are defined by Cal. Civ. Code § 1788.2(f).

#### FACTUAL ALLEGATIONS

- 18. At all times relevant to this matter, Plaintiff was an individual residing within the State of California.
- At all times relevant, Defendant conducted business within the State of 19. California.
- Sometime before July 15, 2008, Plaintiff is alleged to have incurred certain 20. financial obligations.
  - These financial obligations were primarily for personal, family or household 21. purposes and are therefore a "debt" as that term is defined by 15 U.S.C. §1692a(5).
  - These alleged obligations were money, property, or their equivalent, which is 22. due or owing, or alleged to be due or owing, from a natural person to another person and are therefore a "debt" as that term is defined by California Civil Code §1788.2(d), and a "consumer debt" as that term is defined by California Civil Code §1788.2(f).
  - Sometime thereafter, but before July 15, 2008, Plaintiff allegedly fell behind 23. in the payments allegedly owed on the alleged debt. Plaintiff currently takes no position as to the validity of this alleged debt.
- 21 Subsequently, but before July 15, 2008, the alleged debt was assigned, placed, 24. or otherwise transferred, to Defendant for collection. 22
- On or about July 15, 2008, Defendant telephoned Plaintiff and left a message 23 25. demanding payment of the alleged debt. 24
- This communication to Plaintiff was a "communication" as that term is 25 26. defined by 15 U.S.C. § 1692a(2), and an "initial communication" consistent 26 with 15 U.S.C. § 1692g(a). 27

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

25

26

- This communication was a "debt collection" as Cal. Civ. Code 1788.2(b) 27. defines that phrase, and an "initial communication" consistent with Cal. Civ. Code § 1812.700(b).
- During this message, Defendant's agent, Nicole Dalton, stated that she was 28. from PDM's legal department and there was a case pending against Plaintiff.
  - 29. This statement was a false, deceptive, or misleading representation or means in connection with the collection of the alleged debt. As such, this action by Defendant violated 15 U.S.C. §§ 1692e, 1692e(2), and 1692e(10), and because this action violated the language in 15 U.S.C. §§ 1692e, 1692e(2), and 1692e(10), it also violated Cal. Civ. Code § 1788.17.
  - 30. During this message, Defendant also stated two case numbers.
  - This statement was a false, deceptive, or misleading representation or means 31. in connection with the collection of the alleged debt. As such, this action by Defendant violated 15 U.S.C. §§ 1692e, 1692e(2), and 1692e(10), and because this action violated the language in 15 U.S.C. §§ 1692e, 1692e(2), and 1692e(10), it also violated Cal. Civ. Code § 1788.17.
- During this same conversation, Defendant then stated Plaintiff only had 32. twenty-four hours to call her back.
  - This statement was a false, deceptive, or misleading representation or means 33. in connection with the collection of the alleged debt. As such, this action by Defendant violated 15 U.S.C. §§ 1692e, 1692e(2), and 1692e(10), and because this action violated the language in 15 U.S.C. §§ 1692e, 1692e(2), and 1692e(10), it also violated Cal. Civ. Code § 1788.17.
- 24 34. Later that same day, Plaintiff called Defendant to discuss the alleged debts.
  - During this conversation, Defendant's agent, Nicole Dalton, stated that 35. Defendant had two judgments against Plaintiff and were now going to garnish Plaintiff's wages.

This statement was a false, deceptive, or misleading representation or means

1

2

36.

6

7

8

11

23

24

in connection with the collection of the alleged debt. As such, this action by	
Defendant violated 15 U.S.C. §§ 1692e, and 1692e(10), and because this	
action violated the language in 15 U.S.C. §§ 1692e, and 1692e(10), it also	
violated Cal. Civ. Code § 1788.17.	
This statement are also a Calca decoration on minimal address assume that	

- 37. This statement was also a false, deceptive, or misleading representation regarding the character, amount or legal status of the alleged debt. As such, this action by Defendant violated 15 U.S.C. § 1692e(2), and because this action violated the language in 15 U.S.C. § 1692e(2), it also violated Cal. Civ. Code § 1788.17.
- During this same conversation, Defendant also stated that Plaintiff was also 38. required to pay attorney's fees on top of the debt, totaling \$2,000.
- 39. This statement was a false, deceptive, or misleading representation or means in connection with the collection of the alleged debt. As such, this action by Defendant violated 15 U.S.C. §§ 1692e, and 1692e(10), and because this action violated the language in 15 U.S.C. §§ 1692e, and 1692e(10), it also violated Cal. Civ. Code § 1788.17.
- 40. This statement was also an attempt to collect an amount not authorized by the agreement creating the alleged debt or permitted by law. As such, this action by Defendant violated 15 U.S.C. § 1692f(1), and because this action violated the language in 15 U.S.C. § 1692f(1), it also violated Cal. Civ. Code § 1788.17.
- On or about July 15, 2008, Plaintiff's coworker, a third party, as that phrase is 41. anticipated by 15 U.S.C. §1692c(b), received a call from Defendant. During this call with Plaintiff's coworker, Defendant discussed Plaintiff's alleged debt. This call was a "communication" as 15 U.S.C. §1692a(2) defines that term. This communication to a third party was without prior consent, or the express permission of a court of competent jurisdiction, or as reasonably

8

11

HYDE & SWIGART

22

23

24 25

27

26

- necessary to effectuate a post judgment judicial remedy, and was in connection with the collection of the alleged debt, and with a person other than Plaintiff's attorney, a consumer reporting agency, the creditor, the attorney of the creditor, or the attorney of the debt collector. This communication to this third party was not provided for in 15 U.S.C. § 1692b. By making said communication to a third party, Defendant violated 15 U.S.C. § 1692c(b).
- 42. Because this action violated the language in the language in 15 U.S.C. § 1692c(b), Defendant also violated Cal. Civ. Code § 1788.17 as it incorporates 15 U.S.C. § 1692c(b).
- 43. During this conversation with Plaintiff's coworker, Defendant stated the call was regarding a case pending against Plaintiff, and then Defendant provided a case number.
- This statement was a false, deceptive, or misleading representation or means 44. in connection with the collection of the alleged debt. As such, this action by Defendant violated 15 U.S.C. §§ 1692e, and 1692e(10), and because this action violated the language in 15 U.S.C. §§ 1692e, and 1692e(10), it also violated Cal. Civ. Code § 1788.17.
- 45. This statement was also a false, deceptive, or misleading representation regarding the character, amount or legal status of the alleged debt. As such, this action by Defendant violated 15 U.S.C. § 1692e(2), and because this action violated the language in 15 U.S.C. § 1692e(2), it also violated Cal. Civ. Code § 1788.17.
- Later this same day, Plaintiff called Defendant's agent, Nicole Dalton, 46. regarding the telephone message Defendant had left for Plaintiff.
- 47. During this conversation, Defendant stated that she placed that call before speaking to Plaintiff.

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

- When Plaintiff asked Defendant about the details of the call to her coworker, 48. Defendant confirmed she discussed the debt, said it was regarding a pending case against Plaintiff, and provided a case number. During this conversation, Defendant stated that Defendant had not done anything illegal.
- 49. This statement was a false, deceptive, or misleading representation or means in connection with the collection of the alleged debt. As such, this action by Defendant violated 15 U.S.C. §§ 1692e, and 1692e(10), and because this action violated the language in 15 U.S.C. §§ 1692e, and 1692e(10), it also violated Cal. Civ. Code § 1788.17.
- On July 16, 2008, Plaintiff called Defendant to complain about the actions of 50. Nicole Dalton.
- 51. Plaintiff was transferred to a supervisor named Andy.
- Defendant's agent Andy requested Plaintiff send Andy an email regarding her 52. complaint.
- Subsequently, Plaintiff retained an attorney concerning the alleged debt. On 53. or about July 28, 2008, the attorney for Plaintiff advised Defendant by a detailed voicemail that Plaintiff's attorney represented Plaintiff with regard to the alleged debt, consistent with 15 U.S.C. §1692c(a)(2).
- During this voicemail, Plaintiff's counsel clearly revoked any authorization 54. Defendant may have had to charge Plaintiff's debit card or banking account.
- 55. On or about July 28, 2008, the attorney for Plaintiff advised Defendant, by written notice in the form of three separate e-mails, that Plaintiff was represented by said attorney with respect to any consumer debt. This written notice included said attorney's name and address and a request that all communications regarding any consumer debt be addressed to said attorney, consistent with Cal. Civ. Code § 1788.14(c) and 15 U.S.C. §1692c(a)(2).

2

3

4

5

6

7

12

13

14

15

16

17

- Plaintiff's counsel sent emails directly to Defendant's general email address, 56. and also sent emails separately and directly to Defendant's agents Andy and Nicole Dalton.
- In these emails, Plaintiff's counsel again clearly revoked any authorization 57. Defendant may have had to charge Plaintiff's debit card or banking account.
- 58. On or about July 30, 2008 Defendant made an unauthorized withdrawal in the amount of \$250.00 from Plaintiff's debit card account.
- 8 59. This action was an unfair and unconscionable means to collect an alleged debt 9 in violation of 15 U.S.C. § 1692f and 1692f(1).
- This action was also an attempt to collect an amount not authorized by the 10 60. 11 agreement or permitted by law in violation of 1692f(1).
  - This action was also a false, deceptive, and misleading representation in 61. connection with the collection of a debt in violation of 1692e and 1692e(10).
  - Because this action violated 15 U.S.C. §§ 1692f, 1692f(1), 1692e, and 62. 1692e(10), it also violated Cal. Civ. Code 1788.17.
  - On or about July 30, 2008 Defendant made a second unauthorized withdrawal 63. in the amount of \$25.00 from Plaintiff's debit card account.
- 18 64. This action was an unfair and unconscionable means to collect an alleged debt in violation of 15 U.S.C. § 1692f and 1692f(1). 19
- This action was also an attempt to collect an amount not authorized by the 65. 20 21 agreement or permitted by law in violation of 1692f(1).
- This action was also a false, deceptive, and misleading representation in 22 66. 23 connection with the collection of a debt in violation of 1692e and 1692e(10).
- 24 67. Because this action violated 15 U.S.C. §§ 1692f, 1692f(1), 1692e, and 25 1692e(10), it also violated Cal. Civ. Code 1788.17.
- 26
- // 27

//

//

### 2

# 3

### 4

### 5 6

# 8

7

### 9 10

11 12

13 San Diego, California

### 14 15

HYDE & SWIGART

### 16

#### 17

### 18 19

### 20

## 22

23

21

24

25 26

27

28

#### **CAUSES OF ACTION**

#### COUNT I

# VIOLATIONS OF THE FAIR DEBT COLLECTION PRACTICES ACT

### 15 U.S.C. §§ 1692 ET SEQ.

- Plaintiff incorporates by reference all of the above paragraphs of this 68. Complaint as though fully stated herein.
- 69. The foregoing acts and omissions constitute numerous and multiple violations of the FDCPA, including but not limited to each and every one of the abovecited provisions of the FDCPA, 15 U.S.C. § 1692 et seq.
- As a result of each and every violation of the FDCPA, Plaintiff is entitled to 70. any actual damages pursuant to 15 U.S.C. § 1692k(a)(1); statutory damages in an amount up to \$1,000.00 pursuant to 15 U.S.C. § 1692k(a)(2)(A); and, reasonable attorney's fees and costs pursuant to 15 U.S.C. § 1692k(a)(3) from Defendant.

#### **COUNT II**

## VIOLATIONS OF THE ROSENTHAL FAIR DEBT COLLECTION PRACTICES ACT CAL. CIV. CODE §§ 1788-1788.32

- 71. Plaintiff incorporates by reference all of the above paragraphs of this Complaint as though fully stated herein.
- 72. The foregoing acts and omissions constitute numerous and multiple violations of the RFDCPA.
- As a result of each and every violation of the RFDCPA, Plaintiff is entitled to 73. any actual damages pursuant to Cal. Civ. Code § 1788.30(a); statutory damages for a knowing or willful violation in the amount up to \$1,000.00 pursuant to Cal. Civ. Code § 1788.30(b); and reasonable attorney's fees and costs pursuant to Cal. Civ. Code § 1788.30(c) from Defendant.

//

- 11 of 11 -

HYDE & SWIGART

San Diego, California

Complaint

::ODMA\PCDOCS\WORDPERFECT\22816\1 January 24, 2000 (3:10pm)

CNM

DEPUTY

DEF

**D4 D4** 



#### UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA SAN DIEGO DIVISION

# 153735 - MB \* \* C O P Y \* \* August 06, 2008 14:19:47

#### Civ Fil Non-Pris

USAO #.: 08CV1427 CIVIL FILING

Judge..: JOHN A HOUSTON

Amount.:

\$350.00 CK

Check#.: BC2552

Total-> \$350.00

FROM: FITIMA ROBINSON VS

PHOENIX DEBT MANAGEMENT, LLC